

IN THE CLAIMS

PLEASE AMEND THE CLAIMS AS FOLLOWS:

1. (currently amended) A network appliance, comprising:
 - at least one platform service;
 - ~~a load balancing process that performs load balancing on communications received by the network appliance; and~~
 - a service ~~monitoring process~~ monitor that monitors a working status of the at least one platform service using interprocess communications; and
 - a load balancer that performs load balancing on received communications based on at least the working status of the at least one platform service.
2. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 1, further comprising a backplane interface through which the network appliance exchanges data with another device.
3. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 2, wherein the another device hosts at least one second platform service, and the service ~~monitoring process~~ monitor monitors a working status of the at least one second platform service using communications transmitted over the backplane.
4. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 1, further comprising an interface ~~monitoring process~~ monitor that monitors a working status of interfaces and connections employed by the network appliance.
5. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 1, wherein the at least one platform service is an access method service.

6. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 5, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.
7. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim ~~4~~ 5, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.
8. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 1, further comprising a node manager ~~process~~ that ~~monitors~~ determines an operational ~~the working~~ status of the at least one platform service and provides ~~[[a]]~~ the determined operational working status of the at least one platform service to the service ~~monitoring process~~ monitor.
9. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim 1, further comprising a distributed cache service that caches information relating to ~~the~~ at least one platform service on another network appliance.
10. (currently amended) The network appliance ~~recited in~~ of claim ~~1~~ 9, wherein
the at least one platform service is an access method service; and
the cached information includes authentication information and encryption key
information for encryption sessions hosted by the access method service.

11. (currently amended) A network comprising
- a first network appliance having at least one first platform service, ~~a first load balancing process that performs load balancing on communications received by the first network appliance,~~ and a service ~~monitoring process~~ monitor that monitors a working status of the at least one first platform service using interprocess communications, and a first load balancer that performs load balancing on communications received by the first network appliance based on at least the working status of the at least one first platform service; and
 - a second network appliance having at least one second platform service and a second load ~~balancing process~~ balancer that performs load balancing on communications received by the second network appliance.
12. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 11, wherein the second network appliance further includes a second service ~~monitoring process~~ monitor that monitors a working status of the at least one second platform service using interprocess communications.
13. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 11, wherein
- the first network appliance is configured to receive all client communications to the network unless the first load ~~balancing process~~ balancer fails; and
 - the second network appliance is configured to receive all client communications to the network if the first load ~~balancing process~~ balancer fails.
14. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 11, wherein the at least one first platform service is an access method service.
15. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 14, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.

16. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 14, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.

17. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 11, wherein the at least one second platform service is an access method service.

18. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 17, wherein the access method service is a virtual private network service.

19. (currently amended) The network ~~recited in~~ of claim 17, wherein the access method service is an extranet Web service.

20. (currently amended) A method of processing client communications to a network comprising:

receiving a first client communication at a first network appliance hosting at least one first platform service;

employing a load ~~balancing service~~ balancer hosted by the first network appliance to direct the first client communication to ~~[[a]]~~ the at least one first platform service ~~also~~ hosted by the first network appliance based on at least a working status of the at least one first platform service;

receiving a second client communication at the first network appliance; and

employing the load ~~balancing service~~ balancer to direct the second client communication to a second platform service ~~also~~ hosted by a second network appliance based on at least the working status of the at least one first platform service and a working status of the second platform service.

21. (currently amended) The method ~~recited in~~ of claim 20, further comprising:
analyzing the first client communication to determine if the first client
communication includes association data indicating that the first client
communication is associated with the at least one first platform service; and
determining that the first client communication includes association data
indicating that the first communication is associated with the at least one
first platform service.
22. (currently amended) The method ~~recited in~~ of claim 21, wherein the association
data is a session identifier identifying an encryption session maintained by the at least
one first platform service.
23. (currently amended) The method ~~recited in~~ of claim 20, further comprising
executing a load balancing algorithm to determine whether the second client
communication should be directed to the second platform service; and
determining that the second client communication should be directed to the
second platform service based upon results of the executed load balancing
algorithm.
24. (cancelled)
25. (cancelled)